

Growing as a Leader: Spiritually

It doesn't matter if you pastor a church, work in a high-pressure corporate environment, sell real estate, or toil as a full-time parent: the pace of our information-driven, globally-connected, twenty-first-century society forces us to accelerate down the tracks of modern life – and many of us feel dangerously close to flying off the rails.

We are multitasking ourselves into oblivion just to keep up. We push, we strive, and we overcome!

And then we collapse.

Can we keep this up?

Since the outward forces that exert stress on us are unlikely to disappear, our only choice is to look *inward* at ways we can better adapt to our environment.

Is it possible that we can “grow” to deal with the pressures we find ourselves in?

There is a short but powerful scripture passage that can give us guidelines in this area. Luke 2:52 says, “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” (NIV)

THE QUICK SUMMARY - [The Eternal Current](#) by Aaron Niequist

A call for Christians to move past the shallows of idealized beliefs and into a deeper, more vibrant, beatitude-like faith rooted in sacred practices and intimate experiences with God.

When the limits of his own faith experience left him feeling spiritually empty, Niequist determined God must have a wider vision for worship and community.

In his search, Aaron discovered that there was historical Christian precedent for enacting faith in a different way, an ancient and now future way of believing. He calls this third way “practice-based faith.”

This book is about loving one's faith tradition and, at the same time, following the call to something deeper and richer. By adopting some new spiritual practices, it is possible to learn to swim again with a renewed sense of vigor and divine purpose.

A SIMPLE SOLUTION

Gathering together with other members of the body of Christ is necessary – after all, the body is not defined by its individual parts but by the collection of the whole.

On the other hand, attending a church service is not even close to being the most important aspect of a spiritual life. An overemphasis on the weekly Sunday-morning event can do a

disservice to the people of God. Overvaluing what goes on in a church service can actually diminish the church universal, the body of Christ.

Of the 168 hours in each week, a typical church service takes up one or two hours. Your life beyond Sunday-morning church occupies the other 166 hours. By placing too much emphasis on a church service, it is often too easy to deemphasize the development of practice-based faith during the week.

Maybe Sunday isn't the main event of our spiritual growth – what if our actual life Monday-Saturday is the main event?

There is an Eternal Current flowing toward the redemption and restoration of all things, and we've been invited to swim along for the sake of our own lives and the whole world. Fortunately, Christ is a present and gracious teacher, constantly calling out to each one of us.

We have been invited into the River by grace and grace alone. There's nothing we can do to earn our way into the water. But the invitation is to swim, and that takes grace-empowered practice.

What does this grace-empowered practice look like in our daily lives? Note every action is equally helpful, so how do we begin crafting a practice-based life, Monday through Saturday? I will offer four suggestions: we need a toolbox, a rule of life, a plan to help us throw off sin, and a commitment to engage messy, risky service.

A Toolbox

We need to create a toolbox of spiritual formation. Take advantage of accessible books that focus on historic (and modern) spiritual disciplines of the church. While you are immersing yourself in the wisdom of these books, remember that the invitation is participation. Try different practices for a set period of time and notice how they help you align with God's unforced rhythms of grace. No one can or should do every practice, but we all need a well-balanced set of practices.

A Rule of Life

Every one of us has some type of rule of life – how we organize and spend our time and energy – but few of us have a holistic framework that will form us into the fullness of Christ. To begin discerning and crafting a rule of life, we need to get in touch with our deepest desires.

A Plan to Throw Off Sin

To swim with Christ in the River of God, we must let go of the sin that sinks our soul. We don't do this to earn our way into the water; the love of God through Christ beckons us to come as we are. But as we wade deeper into the Current, we begin to notice all the

different weights of the world around our ankles, wrists, and neck.

A Commitment to Messy, Risky Service

A practice-based life Monday through Saturday must involve regular risk in serving others. We need to get our praying hands dirty. There are things we can learn only by moving into destabilizing reality. Reality has a way of exposing who we really are and how we need to grow.

Aaron Niequist, [The Eternal Current](#)

A NEXT STEP

To understand what practice-based faith looks like, begin by reading Matthew 11:28-29 in The Message.

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly. (Matthew 11:28-30, MSG)

Next, on a chart tablet draw horizontal and vertical lines to create four spaces. Write the four phrases from the list above, one in each box.

Set aside 30 minutes a day over the next four days to pray, reflect, and dream about specific actions for each of the four boxes, one each day.

On the fifth day, commit to one or more actions from each box. Plan them into your regular activities so that they eventually become habits of practice-based faith.

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*This is part of a weekly series posting excerpts from one of the most innovative content sources in the church world: **SUMS Remix** book excerpts for church leaders.*

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As a church leader you get to scan relevant books based on practical tools and solutions to real ministry problems, not just by the cover of the book. Each post will have the edition number

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